

## National Qualifications 2024 Strategic Group

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**Date:** Friday 1 March 2024

**Time:** 09:30 – 10:30

MS Teams

**Members:** Fiona Robertson; Gill Stewart; Graham Hutton; James Cowan; John Booth; Justin Walker; Martyn Ware; Olivia Brown; Stewart Nicolson; Tim Chan; Andy Harvey;; Tara Lillis

**Attending:** Donna Stewart; [redacted name]; [redacted name]; [redacted name]; [redacted name]; Martin Ingram; Richard Pidgeon; [redacted name], Emma Sinclair

**Apologies:** Jean Blair; Lorraine Davidson; Anne Campbell; Gillian Hamilton; Dr Gerald Prescott; Jamie Dunlop; Clare Hicks; Richard Pidgeon; Andrea Bradley; Anne Campbell; Cheryl Burnett,

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### Notes

Item	Topic
5.1	<b>Welcome</b> The Chair welcomed members to the fifth meeting of the NQ24 Strategic Group.
5.2	<b>Review of previous minutes</b>  Members approved the note of the previous meeting held on 26 January 2024.  Donna Stewart provided an update on the actions outlined in the note of the previous meeting as follows:  Item 4.3 - A representative from ADES has been identified to join a business/continuity short life working group.  Item 4.4 – The outcome of the evaluation of assessment arrangements will be added to the agenda of the next meeting on 22 March 2024.  Item 4.5 – Our approach to setting grade boundaries in 2024 will be added to the agenda of future meetings where appropriate, including discussion of communication arrangements.  The Chair reminded members that SQA intends to publish the minutes of the NQ24 Strategic Group.
5.3	<b>NQ Evaluation update</b>  [redacted name] provided an update on the Evaluation of the 2023 Approach to the Assessment of Graded National Courses. The evaluation is made up of several strands, including learner and practitioner research and reflections of senior appointees and Qualifications Development Directorate colleagues. Findings from the research are still being analysed but a summary of some of the key messages was provided.

	<p>Responses were received from approximately 3,400 learners and 1,200 practitioners, which represented a 67% increase in learner and 20% increase in practitioner respondents. Most learners and practitioners agreed that they received information on how grades would be determined in 2022–23 early enough in the academic year, that the assessment process was communicated to them effectively, and that they understood how grades would be determined. These proportions had all increased since 2022’s evaluation. Learners and practitioners were asked about EECC and Appeals, with practitioner satisfaction with the process increasing since 2022’s evaluation and the proportion of practitioners who said that the process caused substantial workload was lower than in 2022’s evaluation.</p> <p>Most practitioners believe they have a good understanding of the national standard and value Understanding Standards events and resources. They would, however, appreciate the opportunity to engage more with such events and resources. There were some issues highlighted around practitioners having the capacity to do so. The proportions of respondents who thought that the overall approach to assessment was fair and that they were satisfied with it were high and similar to those in 2022’s evaluation.</p> <p>The reflections of senior appointees and Qualifications Development colleagues research covered a number of topics, including communication, awarding and grading, standards and EECC and Appeals. Almost all respondents agreed that the approach used for awarding in 2023 ensured all relevant factors were considered when setting grade boundaries and almost all agreed that the approach used for awarding in 2023 found an appropriate balance between fairness and maintaining the credibility of qualifications in line with SQA’s statutory function. Senior appointees and qualifications development colleagues reported an increase in practitioners’ consistent understanding and interpretation of the national standard however it was acknowledged that it can be a challenge for some practitioners to engage with Understanding Standards resources and events due to a lack of capacity.</p> <p>Members discussed the early findings from the evaluation and welcomed the thoroughness of the approach. The issue of practitioners’ capacity to engage with Understanding Standards was acknowledged and it highlighted that we must ensure that the work to encourage engagement with materials as a result of the Alternative Certification Model is not lost. Members raised some concerns about the reintroduction of coursework, particularly at Higher and Advanced Higher. SQA is mindful of this concern, and it will be reflected in the grading approach taken this year. SQA will continue to take an evidence-based approach to awarding and grading as with previous years. The 2024 NQ Evaluation will also be used to consider the impact of returning to full course assessment. Members discussed the dissemination of the research and the importance of communicating how the breadth of evidence collected is used to inform to decisions made on policy and processes.</p>
5.4	<p><b>EECC and Appeals policy update.</b></p> <p>Donna Stewart provided members with an update on the review of Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration and Appeals policies. Evidence gathered from the 2023 Evaluation has been used and has fed into the review of both policies. Due to feedback supporting consistency, the service will mirror the approach in 2023. Minor changes to the wording of both policies have been made for the purposes of clarifying centre responsibilities.</p>

5.5	<p><b>Communications and engagement</b></p> <p>John Booth provided an update on recent and upcoming communications activity. An announcement of SQA's approach to awarding and grading will be made on 6 March 2024 for centres and practitioners. Tailored communications will be published for learners and parents / carers. This information was discussed at the partners' communications group and tested with a small number of practitioners and learners. The week commencing 11 March 2024 the booklet for learners, 'Your Exams' will be published on the SQA website. The results of the 2023 Evaluation will be published at the end of March.</p>
5.7	<p><b>Next Steps/AOB</b></p> <p>No other business was raised.</p>
	<p>Date of the next meeting - Friday 22 March 2024.</p>